REFRAMING CULT WESTERNS

From *The Magnificent Seven* to *The Hateful Eight*

EDITED BY
LEE BROUGHTON

BLOOMSBURY

Reframing Cult Westerns

From The Magnificent Seven *to* The Hateful Eight

Edited by
Lee Broughton

BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC
NEW YORK • LONDON • OXFORD • NEW DELHI • SYDNEY

BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC
Bloomsbury Publishing Inc
1385 Broadway, New York, NY 10018, USA

BLOOMSBURY, BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC and the Diana logo are trademarks of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

First published in the United States of America 2020

Cover design by Eleanor Rose
Cover image: Samuel L. Jackson in a still from The Hateful Eight, 2016 (dir. Quentin Tarantino) © ArenaPAL

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Broughton, Lee, 1966- editor.
Title: Reframing cult Westerns: from The magnificent seven to The hateful eight / edited by Lee Broughton.
Description: New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020. | Includes bibliographical references, filmography, and index. | Summary: "This carefully curated collection focuses on a wide range of post-classical era cult Westerns from around the world, offering new critical insights into key films belonging to this important and enduring film genre"– Provided by publisher.
Identifiers: LCCN 2019040275 (print) | LCCN 2019040276 (ebook) | ISBN 9781501343490 (hardback) | ISBN 9781501343513 (epub) | ISBN 9781501343506 (pdf)
Subjects: LCSH: Western films–History and criticism. | Cult films–History and criticism.
Classification: LCC PN1995.9.W4 R44 2020 (print) | LCC PN1995.9.W4 (ebook) | DDC 791.43/6278–dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2019040275
LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2019040276

ISBN: HB: 978-1-5013-4349-0
eBook: 978-1-5013-4351-3
ePDF: 978-1-5013-4350-6

Typeset by Deanta Global Publishing Services, Chennai, India
Printed and bound in the United States of America

To find out more about our authors and books visit www.bloomsbury.com and sign up for our newsletters.

10

Stranger and Friend: Non-American Westerns and the Immigrant in the Twenty-First Century

Jenny Barrett

Introduction: The American Dream

James Truslow Adams's most famous words are often quoted as the first published record of the American Dream, wherein he refers to "that American dream of a better, richer and happier life for all our citizens of every rank, which is the greatest contribution we have made to the thought and welfare of the world" (1931: 214). Historian Jim Cullen argues that there are "many American *Dreams*" peculiar to particular eras in American history, suggesting that it is a most ambiguous concept (2003: 7). Embedded within understandings of this Dream is equality, the ambition written large in the Declaration of Independence that "all men are created equal," as long as they are "civilised and white" (Cullen 2003: 51). The Dream also points toward faith in personal transformation, the belief that "anyone can get ahead" (Cullen 2003: 60). Everyone is eligible, according to the Dream, including those who seek its promise from across its borders. The American Dream reaches across the globe in a continuing "saga," as Cullen puts it, in the "Dream of the Immigrant," "a subtext of the Dream of Upward Mobility [which] has long been marked by ambivalence and despair" (2003: 188). In American mainstream cinema, the American Western in particular, the representation of first-generation immigrants regularly circumvents this "ambivalence and despair" in favor of good, stereotyped homesteaders, who defend the promise of equality and upward mobility.

There are unique Westerns in the genre's history, however, that take a cynical turn on the Dream, particularly one that exposes exploitation of the land, resources, and peoples of America. *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* (Robert Altman,

1971), for instance, shows a man failing in his enterprise in competition with corporate power. Sergio Corbucci's *The Great Silence* (*Il grande silenzio*, 1968) casts its bounty hunter, Loco (Klaus Kinski), as a sadist and exposes his trade as an immoral business endorsed by a corrupt Justice of the Peace-cum-opportunistic financier, Henry Pollicut (Luigi Pistilli). Both examples, one American and one Italian, work to dislocate the Western from its traditional celebration of the underdog and his implicit morality, an ideology that confirmed, as Robin Wood (1977) argued, that America is the land where problems are solved. What the films of this chapter will suggest is that recent non-American, often also transnational, Westerns appear to resist a reaffirmation of the American Dream specifically through the person of the immigrant who is lured to the continent by a promise that is rudely unfulfilled or remodeled as fantasy. The films that make up this study are *The Salvation* (Kristian Levring, 2014), *Jauja* (Lisandro Alonso, 2014), and *Slow West* (John Maclean, 2015).

Stranger and Friend

Contemporary European cinema, according to Guido Rings (2016), exhibits a rising interest in the experience of the migrant, in the context of the increasing pace of migration and despite the rise of right-wing anti-immigration politics in recent years. Rings sees this renewed focus in some European films as "potential reflections of popular attitudes, ideas and preoccupations" (2016: 28), showing a "need for a re-definition of the Self in the context of enhanced globalization, international mass migration and expansion of the European Union" (2016: 158). With US rhetoric on migration becoming almost daily headline news since the inauguration of President Donald Trump in 2017, it is a suitable moment to consider one of the cinematic genres that brings together the immigrant and the United States: the Western. To Rings, migrant cinema's strategy is the "individualizing and humanizing" of the migrant in order to disrupt the binaries of monoculturalism and multiculturalism. Taking Rings's conceptions of migrant cinema and the disruptive migrant, and applying them to non-American Westerns that feature an immigrant as the protagonist, one can expose a sharp critique of the American Dream in the second decade of the twentieth century.

The films of this study can be understood as examples of "migrant cinema" if one were to take the definition from Rings who determines European

migrant cinema as "films about 'migration' to/from 'Europe,' regardless of the cultural background of director, scriptwriters, producers, cast, or potential viewers" (2016: 28). He sees this very inclusive definition as allowing films from nonimmigrant and non-European personnel to be included. *The Salvation* is a Danish film, with a Danish director and male star, a cast including French and British actors, and shot in South Africa. *Slow West*, the most financially successful of the three films, was funded in the UK and New Zealand, stars a young Australian actor as a Scottish character alongside the Irishman Michael Fassbender, and was shot in New Zealand. *Jauja* was filmed in Argentina by an Argentine director, with a Danish-American star and funding from no less than six countries including Denmark, Argentina, France, and the United States. The films chosen here are migrant cinema by virtue of their central characters who, in each case, have traveled to North or South America from Denmark, Scotland, or Ireland. So, the narratives, personnel, and production contexts mean that these films about the immigrant experience in America are examples of both the transnational Western and migrant cinema.

The central characters each, in some way, bring a disruption to the communities they enter by their very identity as outsiders, people from another nation, and this disruption is manifested in the binaries of mono- and multiculturalism that Rings discusses. "Monoculturalism," Rings writes, is "essentialist, homogeneous and separatist in its link to the notion of a people" (2016: 19), and within this notion the binary oppositions of pure/impure, Self/Other, and superior/inferior exist. This view of cultural difference is one that we might recognize from many classical Westerns in their treatment of Native Americans, Asian Americans, and more. The notion of "multiculturalism" recognizes that several peoples may exist respectfully in proximity, but they live in relative isolation and continue to pursue their cultural mores, what Rings describes as "an agenda of enhanced peaceful coexistence, mutual respect and limited interaction" (2016: 158). Later Westerns, such as *Little Big Man* (Arthur Penn, 1971), attempt to encourage this sort of respectful coexistence with Native Americans, as do many Westerns from the mid-1980s onward. "Transculturalism," however, focuses on what Rings calls the "interconnectedness of our increasingly global environment and on interactions and exchanges that contribute to the development of a pool of global cultures potentially facilitating cultural choices" (2016: 20). This is the more "hybrid" notion of cultures where a form of "fusion" may take place. We might be tempted to conclude that this is how we see European immigrants represented in the classical Western, where the immigrant has perhaps married

an American citizen, toils on a homestead, and is raising a family, rather like the Jorgensens in John Ford's *The Searchers* (1956). In fact, Neil Campbell writes that, even from the time of Owen Wister's *The Virginian* in 1902, it was a "diasporic West" (2008: 5), and he encourages us to regard the West as "always, already transnational" (2008: 4).

If we observe Peggy Levitt and Nina Glick Shiller's (2004) conceptualizations of "transnational" and "transcultural," we can see that Rings and Campbell are contributing to the gray area often found in scholarship that is situated between the two terms. They are referring to the identity of the person who has traveled from another nation, and who identities him/herself according to a specific culture, one that may or may not be exclusive to or representative of that nation. Levitt and Shiller write, in reference to the transnational: "Ways of being refers to the actual social relations and practices that individuals engage in rather than to the identities associated with their actions" (2004: 1010). In contrast, they describe the transcultural as "ways of belonging" which, they write, "refers to the practices that signal or enact an identity which demonstrates a conscious connection to a particular group" (2004: 1010). In the Western genre, the two aspects of identity—ways of being and ways of belonging—combine to construct the immigrant as the Stranger from Sweden, Scotland, Ireland, and so forth, whose culture is predominantly signified through accent, name, and perhaps religion, but also, for the character, a conscious identification of them now being "American."

Regardless of the merging of these two concepts in literature about migration and about the Western, it should be noted that what appears to be a transcultural or transnational identity of the immigrant family in the Western is swiftly replaced as they are assimilated, making the shift from what we could call "Stranger" to "Friend," as the immigrant becomes American. As Campbell (2008) confirms, Wister's novel demonstrates exactly this normalizing of difference. Looking at the classical Western, signs of the difference between the two conditions of Stranger and Friend are, principally, effusive faith in the value of America as the land of opportunity (Friend) and, more obviously, an accent (Stranger). Lars Jorgensen (John Qualen), the family patriarch of the transnational family in *The Searchers*, still has his accent while his wife (Olive Carey) and children, Brad (Harry Carey Jr.) and Laurie (Vera Miles), have a generic North American accent. While Mr. Jorgensen frets at their proximity to the frontier ("Oh, Ethan, this country"), he remains there waiting for a better time to come, having faith in his wife's advice: "Someday, this country's gonna be a fine good place to be."

So, the films that will be explored here can be understood as non-American and transnational by virtue of their production contexts, and the Western itself is, from Campbell, "always, already transnational" (2008: 4). Using Rings's understanding, however, we could also describe many Western film narratives as partially transcultural in their depiction of the process of immigrant assimilation. The immigrant in the Western often exists at the boundary between Stranger and Friend, between Self and Other, which is characteristic of monocultural and multicultural perceptions. As the immigrant becomes assimilated, through acquisition of language, loss of accent, and/or by starting a family, his or her different cultural status begins to diminish to the point where only their name signifies their difference. In the case of the Western, this difference is one means of acknowledging transculturalism and ethnic diversity in the narrative of nineteenth-century America, but only insofar as the Stranger/Friend hails from an accepted origin, that is, not African, Chinese, or Asian. As a result, the second generation of the accepted immigrant's family is entirely Self and not Other. But those from an origin that is not accepted will always remain Othered in terms of narrative, casting, and stereotyping, making the US assimilation project less the "development of a pool of global cultures" envisioned by Rings (2016: 20) than a pool of Anglo-Saxon and European cultures.

Roots and Routes

The theme of routes and roots is inspired by the work of Neil Campbell (2008) and his thesis of the "rhizomatic West" which conceptualizes the Western genre in literature and cinema more as a grasslike rhizome, with a global heritage and presence, than a tree with roots only in the United States. One of Campbell's illustrations of transnationalism is Sergio Leone's *Once Upon a Time in the West* (*C'era una volta il West*, 1968), which, he argues, exemplifies Leone's perception of America as "the property of the world" (2008: 141) with its multiple shooting locations and range of ethnicities and cultures represented among the characters, cast, and crew. Within the film Campbell finds a central "concern with migration and mobility" among several of the characters. This theme is one that I believe is central to the three migrant Westerns that I am discussing here: the dialectic between movement and stasis, between the route West and putting down roots in the West, between "routes and roots" (2008: 143). The journey to a home and the putting down of roots is an extension or an outworking of the appeal that

America has to the fictional immigrant: the appeal of the American Dream. The contrast between movement and stasis that this suggests is further complicated in the films of this study. If we recall Rings's claim that migrant cinema humanizes the migrant in order to disrupt ideologies of cultural belonging, it is possible to highlight ways in which these three films disrupt two promises of the American Dream indicated earlier: equality and upward mobility. In each film, as the analysis will demonstrate, the immigrant must either remain in motion (en route), adding a new conceptual layer to Campbell's description of a "diasporic West," or if he stops he must either die or his tale will be enunciated as a fantasy (Once upon a time . . .). Where "upward mobility" is found in the films, it will be either by unethical means such as violence or intimidation, or it will be the manifestation of a fairy tale (Once upon a time . . . again).

The Immigrant Redeemer

Faith in the cluster of ideologies that we call the American Dream is what helps to construct the third and final core structure that this chapter will explore in the films, a trope that is identified by Jonathan J. Cavallero in his study of Frank Capra's films, that of the "immigrant redeemer" (2004). In three urban dramas directed during the 1920s, coinciding with the time of the Immigration Act or Johnson Act of 1924, "Capra looked to the immigrant characters to redeem an American Dream corrupted by greed and materialism," starting a career-long theme in Capra's work of "immigrant redeemers" (2004: 46). Capra, an Italian immigrant director who went on to claim that his heritage had no impact on his filmmaking, was issuing a challenge to audiences in their perception of the immigrant by showing in his 1920s films that "only an innocent and idealistic immigrant, not an American numbed by deceit and greed, could save [the town] and restore traditional American values" (2004: 35). The immigrant's innocence and idealism are not only rewarded with a positive resolution in each of these films, but they are also justified in an affirmation, or redemption, of the American Dream.

As touched upon earlier, the immigrant can be found in the classical Hollywood Western, not as a central character so much as a reassuring presence in the background. The traditional construction of the European immigrant in the classical Hollywood Western is that of the non-threatening, assimilated/assimilating American. They are dedicated to the ideals of the American Dream,

fully aware that their success will be down to hard work and determination, and are consistently grateful for their lot in life. The Fordian immigrant reminds us regularly of an ideology of the United States as the land of opportunity and democracy. Mr. Jorgensen in *The Searchers* may be old and incompetent in the face of danger, and he may be the comic relief with his exclamations of "by golly!," but he is determined for his transcultural family's roots to run deep for the sake of future generations. The Ericsons in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (John Ford, 1962) are the first at Ranse Stoddart's (James Stewart) makeshift school, proclaiming their faith in a nation ruled by the people. Such overt proclamations do not come from the subjectified Westerner whose ethnicity is effectively "invisible," meaning that part of the function of the immigrant in the classical Western is to draw attention to the American Dream, to act as a redemptive influence in the films' constructions of America.

Jim Kitses discusses the immigrants as the "groundlings" and the "meek" in *Liberty Valance*, made up of "a multicultural mix of reluctant cowboys, proud Swedish immigrants, the eager Mexican-American offspring of Andy Devine's prodigious Link Appleyard, the black Pompey (Woody Strode) and Hallie (Vera Miles) herself" (2004: 31). Kitses believes that Ford's own status as a second-generation Irish immigrant impacted on his treatment of these minor characters, humble people, often disenfranchised or stereotyped, writing that the director "had grown up with the sense of cultural dislocation many ethnicities experienced in a polyglot nation" (2004: 32). But Kitses also recognizes that Ford endorsed Irish stereotypes as much as he challenged them (2004: 32). Ford is certainly very careful to avoid sanctioning the male immigrant with the qualities of the ideal, traditionally masculine Westerner. Peter Ericson in *Liberty Valance*, for example, works in a kitchen, clearly encoded as a feminine space in the film, and although Ranse works as a kitchen hand, his status as hero is the very core of the film's challenge to Western heroics.

For the Fordian immigrant, Kitses writes, "the cornerstone of their world . . . was their powerful sense of family, the nourishing roots of the clan, the importance of home, the pain of exclusion" (2004: 32). Kitses considers the significance of the immigrant in the Western genre, particularly for those who identified as "new" Americans in Ford's audience, who would recognize the "cultural dislocation and the search for roots" in the films. He writes: "Both explicitly and implicitly, Ford's was an ethnic frontier" (2004:.42). He makes an interesting claim which, perhaps, might make us wonder why this topic has not been more fully discussed: "by definition Westerners are travelers, immigrants,

pioneers" (2004: 93). Thus part of an essential American identity, as formulated in the classical Western, is travel, the journey. Kitses sees this journeying as paradoxical: "a leaving of home to find a new home, breaking up a family, embracing loss and dislocation, in hope of a better world" (2004: 94). Typically, that better world is confirmed in the classical Western, far less so in the revisionist Western, and is certainly interrogated in the three films of this study.

The three structures outlined earlier, of the immigrant's status as Stranger or Friend, of the fluctuation between following routes and putting down roots, and of the immigrant redeemer, can each be fruitfully explored in *The Salvation*, *Slow West*, and *Jauja*. In doing so, it can be proposed that the films offer a rejection of the American Dream through their tales of the disruptive immigrant in a diasporic West.

The Salvation

The Salvation is part vengeance narrative, part town-tamer, about a Danish immigrant and ex-soldier, Jon (Mads Mikkelson), whose wife and child join him in the American West after seven years of separation while he has been establishing roots there with his brother Peter (Mikael Persbrandt). Jon's family never make it alive to his homestead, the boy murdered and the wife raped then killed by "strangers" on their stagecoach. Jon kills the two men early in the film: vengeance complete. When it is revealed that one of the dead men is the brother of local thug Delarue (Jeffrey Dean Morgan), Jon decides to sell up and move further west. Jon is identified by another immigrant couple in the local town of Black Creek who had seen him on the stagecoach, a concession that not all who have traveled to America are Capra's innocent redeemers. There is no sense of brotherhood between immigrants here, only fear of Delarue who kills random townspeople until his brother's murderer is found. Delarue and the town's Mayor/Undertaker (Jonathan Pryce) are both in the pay of "the Company" which is gradually acquiring land and properties across the area. To more fully establish Delarue's psychopathology, he takes possession of his brother's widow, who he calls "Princess," a scarred, tattooed, and mute ex-captive of Indians played by the enigmatic Eva Green. He rapes her, but talks of it as a beautiful experience and promises that he will parade her in New Orleans. Jon and his brother are arrested and brutalized, but as "men who know war" they have skills that enable them to escape. The term "the man who knows war" is my reformulation of Richard

Slotkin's "the man who knows Indians" in his thesis on frontier mythology (1992: 16). I have adapted his term to describe the war veteran who is found in numerous post–Civil War Westerns, whose fate is influenced by his experience of warfare (Barrett 2009: 74). After Peter is caught and killed, dragged by horses, the final section of the film shows Jon returning to the town and individually eradicating the Mayor, the gang and, finally, Delarue. This last act is with the aid of Princess who shoots Delarue in the back. When the sheriff-priest presents himself to Jon, thanking him for saving the town, Jon expels him at gunpoint. Jon and Princess then ride away from the town.

Depending upon one's view, *The Salvation* is either a collection of clichés or a smart homage with overt references to a number of well-known Westerns of the classical and postclassical canons (*High Noon* [Fred Zinnemann, 1952], *A Fistful of Dollars* [Sergio Leone, 1964], *High Plains Drifter* [Clint Eastwood, 1973], and *Unforgiven* [Clint Eastwood, 1992], just to mention a few). It was not received particularly well at the Cannes Film Festival by reviewer Peter Debruge, who felt that the film depended upon "the new-Western playbook" clichés, and correctly predicted a poor show at the box office (2014). The director, Dogme 95's Kristian Levring, breaks with that movement's technically austere tradition and delivers a highly stylized movie with big name stars. The narrative concerns a Danish immigrant experience, but one that several reviewers accused of as lacking originality. As well as Debruge's critique, Geoffrey MacNab described it as "second-hand" in *The Independent* (2015), and Tim Robey called it "wobbly" and "ugly" in *The Telegraph* (2015). However, the film has more to it than pastiche, particularly in its treatment of the immigrant, that is important to explore.

First, the Stranger/Friend motif is core to the characters and the narrative. Jon and Peter have been in the region of Black Creek for some years and so are regarded as local men (or "Friends"), but their accents still set them apart, so they exist on the border between Stranger and Friend. Jon's wife and son, however, arrive without the ability to speak the language and with complete cultural naivety; they are thus encoded clearly as Strangers. Access to language, similarly, is denied to the Princess, whose tongue was cut out during her captivity. In terms of the immigrant, specifically, the lack of language is something that disempowers. The acquisition of language allows entry into "civilized" society, but until then the non-English speaker in this environment remains an outsider as much as a character with no speech at all. The central character of Corbucci's *The Great Silence*, for example, is set apart by his inability to speak, and he is regularly referred to by others as "Stranger." Without a gun,

the character with no voice or language is, essentially, powerless. In fact, in *The Salvation*, all other immigrants in the film are either relatively powerless, as in the couple who reveals Jon's identity, or overly accomplished in violence, such as Eric Cantona's henchman who respects Jon for fighting the Germans, but tortures him anyway. Either way, they are encoded as different from the other American frontier families. Importantly, when Peter asks his brother who killed Jon's wife and child, his brother simply replies "Strangers." The film is building a contrast between innocent, good immigrants, who offer no threat, and corrupt, amoral Americans who are vicious and deadly. The killers are "normal" white Americans, but it is their behavior that sets them apart as dangerous Strangers, thus the more typical structure of Stranger and Friend is disrupted by the film's early events. The contrast seems designed to encourage the viewer to see the immigrants as true Americans and the killers as Un-American.

In some ways *The Salvation* is an inversion of Leone's *Once Upon a Time in the West*: here it is oil, not water, which is the resource that a capitalist and his gunfighter wish to exploit. In Leone's film the immigrant, Jill McBain (Claudia Cardinale), with what for American and British audiences at least was a European accent, ultimately wins out against the "company" and, we assume, goes on to enjoy the fruits of her Irish husband's vision for a lucrative oasis in the wilderness. In *The Salvation*, the immigrants do not, however, recognize or appreciate the value of the town's natural commodity, and the Danish man does not benefit from his victorious battle with the town's corrupt leaders. Unlike the destruction of Morton (Gabriele Ferzetti) and Frank (Henry Fonda) in Leone's film, which allows Jill to take personal possession of her husband's (American) dream, Jon and Princess leave Black Creek to the control of the Company, despite the key antagonists having been killed or drummed out of town. Jon's dream of putting down roots for his family is destroyed by the Company, and he continues his route further west, perhaps never settling, destined to remain a nomad in the diasporic West.

Jon's role as immigrant redeemer is one that is signaled by the film, but is presented with some irony. The town and its inhabitants are signified as guilty even before the Company and its exploits are revealed: the first scene on the main thoroughfare features several buildings painted red, an allusion to the communally guilty town of Lago in *High Plains Drifter*, which was painted red and renamed "Hell." Their guilt, like that of Lago's inhabitants, revolves around the persecution and abuse of landowners and locals for material gain, here through the ownership of oil fields rather than a lucrative mine works. Despite

Delarue's demise, however, Black Creek is not redeemed. In *High Plains Drifter* there is a clear sense of the town's punishment at the hands of the Stranger (Clint Eastwood), permitting, it is implied, a new beginning. No such promise is made in *The Salvation*. The repeated forward-tracking shots, possibly an ironic metaphor for progress or an indication that Jon's journey is not complete, are finally inverted in an extended reverse tracking shot which reveals the town's destiny: a vast oil field. It is a damning verdict on American late capitalism; the corporation will always win out over the common man. On reflection, the only salvation that occurs is for Princess, who leaves the town a free woman but who is, like Jon, now estranged from the town.

Slow West

Slow West, the second film of this study, follows the journey of Scottish teenager Jay (Kodi Smit-McPhee) as he seeks his sweetheart Rose (Caren Pistorius), using the so-called "Immigrant's Handbook," *Ho! For the West!*, as his guide. The film opens with the words "Once upon a time . . ." which not only signals the Western's nature as myth but also draws attention to Jay's naivety in traversing the Wild West in such an underprepared manner and his ignorance of Rose's and her father's guilt as killers on the run. British director John Maclean chooses to use repeated leftward tracking shots here to echo Jay's westward migration through Colorado and this pointed use of a mobile camera brings to mind the one employed in *The Salvation*. Along the journey, Jay's path is crossed by an Irishman, Silas (Michael Fassbender), who becomes his paid protector and eventually a father-like mentor, despite eventually revealing that he is a bounty hunter seeking Rose and her father. Although Jay insists that there is "more to life than just surviving," he learns a harsh lesson in frontier life when a starving immigrant couple, shouting desperately in Swedish, are killed while attempting to raid a grocer's store. When the action cuts to the outside of the store, their two now-orphaned children are revealed. These immigrants function as a means to remind us that life on the frontier often was a matter of survival.

The film's core conflict is between Silas and a multicultural band led by the bounty hunter Payne (Ben Mendelsohn). His traveling community seems to be on a journey motivated by survival that is characterized by lawlessness. Made up of Mexicans, ex-soldiers, and eventually the two orphaned Swedish children, the band is like a nomadic version of the transcultural mix of characters found

at Ranse Stoddard's school in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*. Jay's naivety and faith eventually softens Silas, to the extent that he protects Rose against the villainous Payne and his gang. In the film's climax, Rose accidentally kills Jay, not recognizing him. Finally, with Payne's gang destroyed and Rose saved, Silas settles with her in a dreamlike, magical resolution. The words "Once upon a time . . ." found at the start of the film thus foreshadow this precise moment.

Rather like *The Great Silence*, again, there is a problematic relationship between bounty-hunting and the common man. In Corbucci's film Loco's sadistic actions against a band of multiethnic outlaws, who have been barely surviving, expose the heartless, insatiable nature of bounty-hunting as a business. In *Slow West*, Payne is also a bounty hunter and in fact his thick, dark bearskin coat resembles the costume worn by Klaus Kinski's Loco. *Slow West* problematizes *The Great Silence*'s more clear-cut division between moral and immoral characters by showing Payne's own mobile band as a community of ethnically diverse survivors, a group that takes in starving children no less. Where Loco's passion for bounty-hunting was in service of his greed and sadism, Payne and his fellow travelers need the reward of bounty-hunting in order to simply survive. For Silas's American Dream to be fulfilled through settling with Rose, however, Payne and his adult gang members must all die.

As with *The Salvation*, *Slow West* uses the three structures that I have highlighted in its treatment of the immigrant's story. Jay's and Silas's accents set them apart as immigrants from Scotland and Ireland respectively, although they speak the language of the white Americans. Silas is an experienced frontiersman who knows the wild spaces well, whereas Jay's knowledge of the West goes only so far as his Immigrant Handbook, a publication that in itself is more akin to a propaganda text for the settler of some means as opposed to being a genuinely useful survival tool, and so Jay is clearly encoded as Stranger. When Rose fails to recognize him then fatally shoots him, his status as Stranger is made fully tangible. The structure of routes and roots in *Slow West* is at the film's core. Jay's route West is inspired by love and enthusiasm, and sees him journey from boyhood to manhood as he learns something of the "real frontier." Nevertheless, he never loses his single-minded love for Rose and belief in his destiny with her. His goal, to settle, is destroyed—as it is for Jon in *The Salvation*—this time in his own death at the hands of the woman he loves. It is the metaphysical journey of Silas that is the message that is perhaps more telling in *Slow West*. This hardened bounty hunter, described by Jay as a "lonely, lonely man," is deeply affected by the childlike Jay, to such an extent that his metaphysical journey west returns him to

an immigrant innocence. He saves/redeems Rose, but in fact he has already been redeemed himself by the immigrant Jay. Silas thus finds his way back to faith in the American Dream, albeit less the promise of equality. Silas's version of the Dream is more the dream of unhindered upward mobility that is signaled by the end of his journeying and a new settled life in a sun-filled homestead.

Jauja

Jauja is not set in the American West and is, like much of Alonso's work, an example of the filmmaking style often referred to as slow cinema. It also refuses to conform to the demands of classical realist filmmaking in its nonlinear and open-ended narrative. Alonso frames the image with a border, akin to early cinema, in a 1.33:1 ratio, summoning an impression of nineteenth-century photography. Despite these characteristics, it has very strong associations with the American Western throughout. Captain Dinesan (Viggo Mortensen) is part of the so-called "Conquest of the Desert," the Danish military campaign in South America that sought to eliminate the Mapuche population (the indigenous people of the area) during the 1870s. Dinesan is a Danish engineer working in Patagonia, living in a tent with his daughter, Ingeborg (Viilbjørk Malling Agger), alongside a small band of workers and Danish military. A renegade by the name of Colonel Zuluaga, who is never seen on screen, has joined forces with the local "gauchos," or bandits, and is in hiding dressed as a woman. Ingeborg begins a relationship with one of the soldiers and they disappear together at night, taking a compass from Dinesan's belongings. Dinesan spends the remainder of the film searching for his daughter, whose lover is found dying of his wounds from an attack by Zuluaga. He eventually crosses a harsh, rocky wilderness to find an elderly woman in a cave (Ghita Nørby). The woman lives alone with her dog, and she is in possession of the missing compass. The dialogue implies that she may be a manifestation of Ingeborg, but Dinesan leaves the old woman and continues on his quest across the nightmarish, desolate landscape. The actress who plays young Ingeborg is seen in a final scene set in contemporary Denmark where she discusses the health of her dog with a man, finds a small toy soldier that had been in the old woman's cave, and throws it away.

The South American countryside locations seen in *Jauja* were filmed in Argentina but they are photographed and referred to in ways that are familiar to the Western, with mention made of a frontier and the wilderness. However,

Jauja's narrative content makes it clear that the landscape depicted is not North America, and this adds a more self-conscious layer of difference to the film. That said, viewers of American and non-American Westerns alike have become somewhat familiar with the general aesthetics of Western-style action that unfolds in "inauthentic" locations since the majority of the genre's films are now filmed outside of the United States. Significantly, signs and symbols of the Western are found in *Jauja* despite its narrative location. Indigenous people are described as savages; one of the military characters describes them as "coconut heads." Mortensen on-screen often draws John Wayne to mind when he is sat astride a horse, with his costume and saber reminiscent of those Wayne wore in John Ford's Westerns such as *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* (1949). Several reviewers have made note of *Jauja*'s similarities to Ford's *The Searchers* in particular, specifically the search for Ingeborg which echoes Debbie's (Natalie Wood) captivity narrative in that film. But as well as this, shots in *Jauja* appear to be deliberately modeled on moments from the two Ford films. Mortensen's knelt pose, slumped in despair, which was used on some of the film's publicity material, evokes both Wayne's bowed head as Captain Brittles at the side of his dying fellow soldier in *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* and Wayne's silhouette when Ethan Edwards discovers his dead sister-in-law, Martha, in *The Searchers*. It is an image that returns us to Cullen's verdict on the American Dream of the immigrant, characterized by ambivalence and despair (2003: 188).

In spite of its displaced setting, applying the three immigrant frameworks to *Jauja* does find a film that metaphorically confronts the American Dream through the immigrant. Dinesan is consistently presented narratively, visually and even verbally as a Stranger. An interview for *Sight and Sound* has Mortensen referring to Dinesan's difference through his accent, a Danish man speaking Spanish, which sets him apart (Diestro-Dópido 2015: 22). As well as this, in his search that never ends, he is never settled, he is always moving, consistently en route, following his daughter's route, never putting down roots. After his daughter's disappearance he is never at peace, never comforted, or welcomed except when he finds the elderly cave-dweller. His failure to find his daughter and his ongoing journey resist the resolutions of the films discussed earlier, since the savage Zuluaga is never located and punished, unlike *The Searchers*'s Scar (Henry Brandon). Lastly, Dinesan strives to free or "redeem" his daughter, but his role as immigrant redeemer is characterized by failure in a wild, savage space that overwhelms him. Although the tone is very different from the final scene of *Slow West*, with its overly positive fairy tale resolution, *Jauja* shares a non-realist

conclusion, resisting closure in an implication of cyclical, pointless yearning for a better life. There is even an implication that Dinesan's story is part of the dream of a young girl living in contemporary Denmark, potentially allowing a reading of post-imperial guilt.

What is particularly interesting is the film's formulation of the dream of a better future, in some ways akin to the American Dream. The Spanish word "*jauja*" refers to a mystical concept of Paradise which is an illusion. It can be used to refer to concepts as varied as heaven, luxury, and holiday. Those seeking it, according to myth, are lost and confounded. It is unclear from the film whether the Danish immigrants are attempting to turn Patagonia into their "promised land" or whether the search for Ingeborg is Dinesan's quest for Paradise. What can be argued, however, is that the overt references to the American Western in this film allow us to perceive the failed quest to find *jauja* as a measure of the inadequacy of the American Dream. As with the other films of this study, the Dream is exposed as an empty promise, an illusion.

Conclusion

Jon in *The Salvation*, Jay in *Slow West*, and Dinesan in *Jauja* are protagonists who remain more Stranger than Friend because they either die or are forced to keep moving on. For each, their journey does not end with the putting down of roots. For each, their dream of settling, endorsed by faith in the American Dream, is not fulfilled. And although they are immigrant redeemers, functioning to remind other characters that there are good values to defend, none of them benefit from their act of redemption. Instead of offering a Fordian tale of assimilation and celebration of traditional American values, the immigrant's settlement is violently rejected in *The Salvation*, which issues a verdict on America's rapacious exploitation of the world's resources. Despite the apparent bittersweet resolution of *Slow West*, with Silas settling with Rose, the film is overtly encoded as a myth. With the opening words "Once upon a time," the lilting waltz repeatedly playing in the background and the hazy, dreamlike closure, the immigrant's happy ending becomes a fairy tale. *Jauja* recasts the Western with Danish and Argentine characters, and by inference paints the American Dream as a dream of despair for the immigrant.

Other Western formulations of the immigrant and the American Dream have emerged in the same time period as these other films. *Brimstone* (2016),

for example, from Dutch director Martin Koolhoven, is a transnational Western about immigrant Joanna (Dakota Fanning). Her Dutch father (Guy Pearce) is the minister of a Puritan settlement in America where he preaches the message of America as John Winthrop's "city upon a hill," the creed of the English Separatists of the seventeenth century, the first American Dream of an ideal nation. The minister is revealed to be a misogynist, sadist, and pedophile, a false immigrant redeemer. As a child, Joanna resists assimilation by continuing to speak Dutch and eventually flees the "roots" put down by her father, is sold into prostitution, escapes and poses as her mute friend Liz, marries, and is finally hunted down by her father again. The film's core focus, it should be acknowledged, is on women as objects or possessions to be controlled, beaten, and caged, quite literally. But it clarifies two matters: First, the equality spoken of in the Declaration of Independence, seen by many as the spirit of the American Dream, was not considered by all to be for women. Second, the Settlers' American Dream of the United States as the "city upon a hill," the model nation to the world, is revealed to be vacuous with the American West depicted as a place of exploitation, greed, and perversion. Despite settling peacefully and prospering after killing her father (Joanna establishes a sawmill and makes plans for her family's future) her fate is not to enjoy the roots that she has put down. Her past finally catches up with her, and she is arrested as "Liz" for the murder of her brothel owner. She chooses to free herself by drowning, leaving, emphatically, a daughter not a son to grow up the beneficiary of her enterprise, possibly a more optimistic closure than one might have expected from such a dark film.

It is important to consider why a focus on the immigrant has emerged in recent transnational Westerns. Given that the films explored (with the exception of *Brimstone*) are pre-Trump era releases, it is clear that a cynical rejection of the American Dream through the person of the immigrant was already part of the zeitgeist and had found its way into public and media discourses prior to Donald Trump's dream of a "great, great wall" (see Rupert Neale 2015). The controversial relationship between the United States and immigration is as old as its history, but what seems to have emerged is a more self-conscious discourse, resisting the subject position of the white American male and instead centralizing the immigrant's subjectivity. This discourse is not restricted to the non-American or transnational Western and can increasingly be found in newscasting, TV dramas, and documentary-filmmaking about the immigrant experience that report on the "tough" approach of some world leaders as they respond to unprecedented numbers of refugees and migrants crossing their borders. The relocation of the

immigrant Westerner to a narrative center, as subjective protagonist, allows the Western tale to hold the American Dream of the immigrant to account for its "ambivalence and despair" (Cullen 2003: 188)—a verdict that seems apt in the light of current prospects for so many.

Bibliography

Adams, James Truslow. *The Epic of America*. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1931.

Barrett, Jenny. *Shooting the Civil War: Cinema, History and American National Identity*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2009.

Campbell, Neil. *The Rhizomatic West: Representing the American West in a Transnational, Global Media Age*. Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 2008.

Cavallero, Jonathan J. "Frank Capra's 1920s Immigrant Trilogy: Immigration, Assimilation, and the American Dream." *Melus* 29, no. 2 (2004): 27–53.

Cullen, Jim. *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea that Shaped a Nation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Debruge, Peter. "Cannes Film Review: *The Salvation*." *Variety*, May 16 (2014). Available online at: http://variety.com/2014/film/festivals/cannes-film-review-the-salvation-1201182872/ (accessed May 23, 2016).

Diestro-Dópido. "Living the Dream." *Sight and Sound*, 25, no. 5, May (2015): 22.

Hall, Edward H. *Ho! For the West!! The Traveller and Emigrants' Hand-book to Canada and the North-West of the American Union*. 3rd ed. London: Algar & Street, 1858.

Holmlund, Chris. *Impossible Bodies: Femininity and Masculinity at the Movies*. New York & London: Routledge, 2002.

Kitses, Jim. *Horizons West: Directing the Western from John Ford to Clint Eastwood*. London: British Film Institute, 2004.

Kollin, Susan (ed.). *Postwestern Cultures: Literature, Theory, Space*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007.

Levitt, Peggy and Nina Glick Schiller. "Conceptualizing Simultaneity: A Transnational Social Field Perspective on Society." *International Migration Review*, 38, no. 3 (2004): 1002–39.

MacNab, Geoffrey. "*The Salvation* Film Review: Danish-made Western Shot in South Africa is Full of Blood." *Independent*, April 17 (2015). Available online at: http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/reviews/the-salvation-film-review-danish-made-western-shot-in-south-africa-is-full-of-blood-10183003.html (accessed August 3, 2018).

Neale, Rupert. "Donald Trump Announces US Presidential Run with Eccentric Speech." *Guardian*, June 16 (2015). Available online at: https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/jun/16/donald-trump-announces-run-president (accessed January 8, 2019).

Rings, Guido. *The Other in Contemporary Migrant Cinema: Imagining a New Europe?* London: Routledge, 2016.

Robey, Tim. "*The Salvation* Review: A Waste." *Telegraph*, April 16 (2015). Available online at: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/film/the-salvation/review/ (accessed May 23, 2016).

Slotkin, Richard. *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America*. New York: Maxwell Macmillan, 1992.

Wister, Owen. *The Virginian*. London and New York: Macmillan, 1902.

Wood, Robin. "Ideology, Genre, Auteur." *Film Comment* 13, no. 1 (1977): 46–51.